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CHAPTER

4

The Social Science: Scientific Research Shows That Children of Gay Parents Are Just as Healthy and Well-Adjusted as Other Children

Chapter 3 discussed the major children's health and welfare organizations' positions on parenting by lesbians and gay men. These groups all agree that a person's sexual orientation says nothing about his or her ability to be a good parent, and that being raised by lesbian or gay parents does not impair children's development in any way. The reason they all agree is that it has been firmly established by scientific research. This chapter of *Too High A Price* is devoted to a discussion of that research.

Until the 1970s, there was virtually no scientific research on gay parents or their children because there were not very many openly gay parents to study. Until then, lesbians and gay men raising children generally were not open about their sexual orientation for reasonable fear of losing custody of their children or other forms of discrimination. It wasn't until the gay liberation movement was well underway that lesbian mothers and gay fathers began to come out in significant numbers, providing subjects to study. And the 1980s marked the beginning of the "lesbian baby boom," a rise in lesbian couples planning families together through adoption or assisted reproductive technology. More and more gay male couples are also choosing to become parents.

With the appearance of openly gay and lesbian parents in the last quarter century, and in significant numbers in the past 20 years, scientists have had the opportunity to study these families, evaluating the parenting abilities of lesbian and gay parents and how well their children are developing. There is now a well-developed body of scientific research on lesbian and gay parents and their children in scholarly journals.⁶² The academic literature includes more than two dozen studies that have evaluated several hundred parents and children. The studies found, without exception, that gay people are just as capable parents and that children raised by lesbians and gay men are just as healthy and well-adjusted as other children.

This chapter first provides an overview of the scientific research on lesbian and gay parents and their children, describing how the studies were conducted, the findings they reported, and the significance of those findings to researchers. The

chapter then discusses what developmental psychologists have determined are the factors that do predict children's healthy development, and explains the relevance of another body of research often raised in the debate about gay parents: the research on children raised in single-parent families. Also included in this chapter is an interview with Professor Judith Stacey, a sociologist who is a nationally recognized expert on gay parents and their children. At the end of the chapter are concise summaries of 25 of the leading studies on lesbian and gay parents and their children.

An Overview of the Scientific Research on Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children

What Did the Studies Explore?

Researchers studying lesbian and gay parents and their children have explored a broad range of issues, but most of the studies have focused on one or more of the following topics:

- Children's overall well-being: psychological and emotional development, social development, and cognitive development
- Quality of parenting: parenting practices, competence and attitudes, parenting ability, such as parental mental health and the quality of the relationship between the parents
- Gender and sexual development of the children

Who Did the Researchers Study?

This body of research looked at diverse samples of families headed by lesbian and gay parents. The majority of the research examined lesbian mothers and their children but some studies focused on gay fatherhood.⁶³ The research includes studies of children of lesbian mothers who had conceived them during previous heterosexual relationships,⁶⁴ as well as studies of children of lesbian mothers conceived through donor insemination and raised from birth in lesbian mother households.⁶⁵ No well-known studies have focused exclusively on families of lesbians and gay men who have adopted children with no biological relationship to either parent.

Some studies compared children of single lesbian mothers to children of single heterosexual mothers.⁶⁶ Others compared children of lesbian couples to those raised by heterosexual couples.⁶⁷ The studies also looked at children across the age spectrum. Some examined young children.⁶⁸ Others looked at adolescents and young adults.⁶⁹ Some were longitudinal, following children over the course of their childhoods, some continuing through adolescence and even into adulthood.⁷⁰ The studies are also geographically diverse, including samples of families

from various states in this country,⁷¹ as well as families in England,⁷² Belgium,⁷³ and the Netherlands.⁷⁴

Most of the families studied were located by such methods as placing advertisements in gay magazines and newspapers, posting notices with women's groups and gay community organizations, and through referrals. This type of sampling—seeking out eligible subjects where the researcher expects to find them—is known as convenience sampling and is typically used in psychological research, especially where the population being studied is a small minority that is hard to find. However, in some of the more recent studies, researchers were able to study families drawn from random samples. For example, two research teams drew samples from all former patients of fertility clinics who had children in a certain age range.⁷⁵ One study drew its subjects from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children, a study of all of the children born in Avon, England over the course of a designated 20-month period that included over 14,000 children.⁷⁶ Another study was based on a nationally-representative sample of over 12,000 adolescents in the United States.⁷⁷

How Were the Studies Conducted?

Most of the studies compared families headed by lesbian parents to families with heterosexual parents, matching them for other criteria that might affect development, such as parents' age, income, family size, and family structure (single versus two-parent families). Like most research in the field of developmental psychology, most of these studies were intensive examinations of children and parents. The samples typically included a few dozen subjects in each group, although some were larger.⁷⁸ The methods used by researchers included a range of the standard methodologies utilized in the field of developmental psychology. They include psychologist interviews of children and parents, reports from teachers, children's play narratives, and widely used instruments with demonstrated reliability such as the "Child Behavior Checklist" and the "Beck Depression Inventory."⁷⁹

What Did the Studies Find?

THE CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

The sexual orientation of parents does not affect the psychological well-being of children. The issue that has been of greatest interest to researchers studying lesbian and gay parent families has been the psychological well-being of the children. Most of the studies focused on this issue, comparing children of lesbian parents to children raised by heterosexual parents with respect to mental health and emotional adjustment. Across the studies, there were no differences between the two groups in terms of the rates of psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety. They had equivalent rates of emotional and behavioral problems. And there were no differences in levels of self-esteem. Not a single one of these studies found any correlation between parental sexual orientation and any adverse effect on children's psychological or emotional development.⁸⁰

The sexual orientation of parents does not affect children's social development. Several studies assessed the peer relationships of children raised by lesbian parents. These studies consistently found that children of lesbian parents made friends and formed healthy peer relationships just as well as their peers.⁴⁰

Some researchers looked specifically at children's exposure to teasing and bullying. They found that most children in both heterosexual and lesbian parent families had experienced teasing and name-calling. Two studies found that the children of lesbian mothers were not teased or bullied more than other kids, but if they were teased, it was more likely to be about their family or their own sexuality.⁴¹

Some researchers also explored children's comfort level with disclosing the nature of their families to their peers and found results similar to the experience of children of other nontraditional families such as divorced families. A 1995 study found that, while the majority of the children of lesbian mothers told at least some friends about their family without encountering negative responses, some concealed that information.⁴² A 2002 study found that most children would explain the nature of their two-mother family to strangers only if asked, but would spontaneously share that information with their close friends and usually receive a positive reaction.⁴³ That study also found that children of lesbian mothers did not show reluctance to invite friends to their home.

A few studies examined children's relationships with their extended families and found that there were no differences between children of lesbian mothers and children of heterosexual parents with respect to the amount of contact they had with their grandparents and other extended family members and the closeness of the relationships formed with those relatives.⁴⁴

The sexual orientation of parents does not affect children's cognitive development. Some studies focused on children's cognitive and intellectual development and school functioning and found no differences between children of lesbian parents and children of heterosexual parents.⁴⁵

THE QUALITY OF THE PARENTING

The parenting skills of lesbian and gay parents are at least as good as those of heterosexual parents. A number of studies evaluated the parenting practices, competence, and commitment of lesbian and gay parents compared to heterosexual parents. For example, researchers looked at the amount of contact and involvement parents had with their children, parental warmth, parents' responsiveness to children's needs, supervision, and limit setting. The studies consistently found that the parenting skills of lesbian mothers and gay fathers were at least as good as the parenting skills of heterosexual parents. There were no differences in parents' commitment to their children correlating with parents' sexual orientation.⁴⁶ Moreover, some studies found that lesbian mothers were less likely than heterosexual parents to use corporal punishment.⁴⁷

The sexual orientation of parents does not affect the quality of their relationships with their children. Some researchers assessed the quality of parent-child relationships (e.g., the warmth, sensitivity, and emotional involvement) in lesbian parent families compared to heterosexual parent families. They found that the quality of the parent-child relationships between lesbian mothers and their children was at least as good as those in heterosexual parent families.⁴⁸

Parents' mental health does not differ based on their sexual orientation. Because a parent's psychological well-being can affect his or her effectiveness as a parent, a number of researchers measured the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among lesbian mothers compared to heterosexual parents.⁴⁹ None of these studies found any differences in mental health between the two groups of parents.

The quality of the couple relationship between the parents does not differ based on sexual orientation. Studies that evaluated the quality of the relationship between the two parents in two-parent families found that the lesbian couples raising children were at least as satisfied in their relationships as the heterosexual couples with children, and there were no differences between the two groups in the level of relationship conflict.⁵⁰ Some studies found that lesbian couples were more compatible in their parenting than heterosexual couples.⁵¹

THE GENDER AND SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILDREN

Parents' sexual orientation has no impact on children's gender identity. Some researchers have looked to see whether being raised by lesbian parents has any effect on children's gender identity (a child's sense of himself or herself as a boy or a girl). These studies found that parental sexual orientation had no impact on children's gender identity development. None of the children studied to date has shown evidence of gender identity confusion.⁵²

Children raised by lesbian parents may feel less constrained by sex stereotypes than children raised by heterosexual parents. Some researchers studied whether parental sexual orientation had an impact on children's gender roles (i.e., how much they conformed to societal notions of what behavior is appropriate for boys and for girls). Developmental psychologists recognize that this is not an issue of adjustment; neither conformity to stereotypes about how girls or boys should behave nor departure from sex stereotypes means anything about whether an individual is well-adjusted.⁵³ But other areas of research have shown that where parents break from traditional gender stereotypes (e.g., families in which mothers and fathers share the child care responsibility), the children tend to be less sex-stereotyped.⁵⁴ So researchers were interested in learning if and how being raised by lesbian parents affects gender role behavior. Researchers examined children's feelings and behaviors in play, how they dress, their school activities, and their occupational aspirations. The studies consistently found that the children of lesbian mothers, like those raised by heterosexual parents, generally fell within the conventional norms of sex-typed behavior.⁵⁵ Some studies found that more of the children of lesbian mothers showed a wider range of behaviors (e.g., playing with both dolls

a considerable body of professional literature provides evidence that children with parents who are homosexual can have the same advantages and the same expectations for health, adjustment, and development as can children whose parents are heterosexual.¹⁰⁶

The Child Welfare League of America's statement in support of same-sex parenting explained that group's assessment of the scientific research,

Studies using diverse samples and methodologies in the last decade have persuasively demonstrated that there are no systematic differences between gay or lesbian and non-gay or lesbian parents in emotional health, parenting skills, and attitudes toward parenting. No studies have found risks to or disadvantages for children growing up in families with one or more gay parents, compared to children growing up with heterosexual parents. Indeed, evidence to date suggests home environments provided by gay and lesbian parents support and enable children's psychosocial growth, just as do those provided by heterosexual parents.¹⁰⁷

With study after study showing uniform results, whether parental sexual orientation affects children's successful adjustment is no longer an open question or subject of debate among social scientists. It is well-settled that it does not.

The Factors that Do Matter to Children's Development

The studies' findings that children of lesbian and gay parents are equally well-adjusted is consistent with what has long been known about children's development from the broader body of scientific research. An enormous body of research on children conducted by developmental psychologists over the past 50 years has shown that children's healthy adjustment depends overwhelmingly upon three factors:

- the quality of the parenting—affection, reliability, consistency, limit setting, responsiveness, and emotional commitment promote healthy adjustment;
- the quality of the relationship between the parents (if there are two)—harmonious relationships support healthy adjustment of children, while significant conflict impedes it; and
- the availability of adequate economic resources.¹⁰⁸

This is the case for children who are raised in what used to be called "traditional" families (but are now a minority among families): a married mother and father where the father is the breadwinner and the mother takes care of the children. And it is equally so for children raised in the range of "nontraditional" families—

single-parent families, families with employed mothers and/or stay-at-home fathers, step-families, adoptive families, and lesbian and gay parent families. If the quality of the parenting is good, there is a harmonious relationship between the parents (if there are two), and the family has adequate resources, this creates the best chance for children to grow up to be happy, healthy, productive members of the community. But where the parenting is poor, where there is significant conflict between the parents, and/or the family lacks sufficient resources, then the risk that the child will suffer from maladjustment is much higher.¹⁰⁹

It is now beyond any serious scientific dispute that these factors, and not demographic characteristics like parents' sexual orientation or gender, are the major influences on children's adjustment. There is no reason to expect lesbians and gay men to be less likely to have the necessary parenting skills and qualities such as affection and consistency, nor that they would be more likely to lack economic resources. And research shows that lesbian and gay couples are no more prone to high-conflict relationships than heterosexual couples.¹¹⁰ Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the research shows that children of lesbian and gay parents are not at heightened risk for any adjustment problems.

What Does the Scientific Research on Single-Parent Families Say About Children Raised by Lesbian or Gay Parents?

There is a large body of research that has consistently found that children in single-parent families have a higher rate of negative outcomes (e.g., emotional and behavioral problems, dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, antisocial and even criminal behavior) than children raised in two-parent families.¹¹¹ In the debate about parenting by lesbians and gay men, opponents of gay parents often point to this body of research as demonstrating that children's healthy development depends on having a mother and father and, thus, that heterosexual couples make the best parents. But this research says nothing about parents' sexual orientation or gender.

First, the studies on the impact of single parenthood on children compared single and married-couple *heterosexual* parents. None examined the development of children raised by same-sex couples. As discussed above, all the studies that did compare children of same-sex and different-sex couples found no differences in adjustment.

And the research on single-parent families shows that it is not the *gender* of the absent parent that is responsible for the different outcomes of children raised in single versus two-parent families. Rather, most researchers have concluded that it is the *number* of parents and their resources, as well as the disruptive effects and conflict of divorce (the route to single-parent family life for most children) that account for these differential risks.¹¹²

Children in single-parent families typically enjoy fewer economic and educational resources than two adults can offer a child.¹¹³ Numerous studies show that with

adequate socioeconomic resources, most children who grow up in single-parent families do well.¹⁶ And divorce often involves parental conflict, the loss or diminishment of a relationship with one parent, and loss of resources; the negative effects of these circumstances on children is well-documented in the research.¹⁶

Moreover, the notion that it is the absence of a male or a female parent that makes the difference for children in single-parent families is contradicted by the fact that children whose fathers died do not experience the same adjustment problems experienced by children who live with a single mother after divorce,¹⁶ and by the fact that children in step-families are also at a higher risk for adverse outcomes.¹⁷

Sara S. McLanahan, one of the most prominent researchers of the effects on children of being raised in single-parent families, concluded that her results "do not support the notion that the long term absence of a male role model itself is the major factor underlying family structure effects."¹⁸ Similarly, Michael Lamb, a preeminent expert in paternal effects on child development, concludes that "very little about the gender of the parent seems to be distinctly important" with respect to children's development.¹⁹

The only bearing that research comparing heterosexual single-parent and married two-parent families has on the discussion about gay parents is that it suggests that, all other things being equal, children would tend to do better with two gay or lesbian parents than one.

A Conversation with Professor Judith Stacey

Judith Stacey is a professor of sociology at New York University and a senior scholar with the Council on Contemporary Families. In 2001, she and Timothy J. Biblarz published a review of the social science research on lesbian and gay parenting, "(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?" in the *American Sociological Review*:

Conservative activists everywhere argue that heterosexuals make better parents than gay men and lesbians. Is there anything in the body of social science research that supports this claim?

No, nothing at all. Significant, reliable social scientific evidence indicates that lesbian and gay parents are at least as fit, effective, and successful as heterosexual parents. The research also shows that children of same-sex couples are as emotionally healthy and socially adjusted and at least as educationally and socially successful as children raised by heterosexual parents. No credible social science evidence supports a claim to the contrary.

What about all the research showing that children raised by married couples are much less likely to have a host of problems such as juvenile delinquency, involvement with drugs, dropping out of school, and teen pregnancy?

The body of research you're referring to compares children raised by single and

married couple heterosexual parents. Lesbian and gay parents and their children are not included in this research. All of the research that compares children based on their parents' sexual orientation finds that this factor has no impact on their healthy development.

Conservative activists are misrepresenting the single-parenthood research as showing that children need a mother and a father—a male and a female parent—and, thus, that gay couples are poorer parents. That is simply not true. The research shows that the poorer outcomes for children in single-parent families are not attributable to the gender of the parents. They are consequences of having one parent instead of two to supervise, guide, and provide resources for a child, and the unfortunate byproducts of divorce for many children such as conflict, the loss of a relationship with one parent, and dislocations such as moving to a new neighborhood and changing schools. The leading scholars on single-parent families agree that the absence of a male or female parent is not the issue for these children; it's the absence of a second parent and the negative circumstances that often accompany divorce. There is no evidence that the gender combination of parents represents a risk factor for healthy child development.

Some opponents of lesbian and gay parenthood argue that the studies you cite (and the ones we summarize in this book) are not reliable because they used flawed research methods and resulted in flawed findings. What is your response?

The studies that have been conducted are certainly not perfect—virtually no study is. First, it's almost never possible to transform complex social relationships, such as parent-child relationships, into distinct and meaningful quantifiable measures. Second, because many lesbians and gay men remain in the closet, we cannot know if the participants in the studies are representative of all gay people. However, the studies we reviewed are just as reliable and respected as studies in most other areas of child development and psychology. They generally compare well-matched groups of children with heterosexual and lesbian or gay parents. The studies we discussed have been published in rigorously peer-reviewed and highly selective journals, whose standards represent expert consensus on generally accepted social scientific standards for research on child development. Those journals include *Child Development* and *Developmental Psychology*, the two flagship journals in the field of child development. The first is published by the 5,000-member academic Society for Research in Child Development, and the second is published by the American Psychological Association.

So those critics of this body of research are really leveling attacks on well-accepted social science methods. Yet, they do not raise objections to studies that are even less rigorous or generalizable on such issues as the impact of divorce on children. It seems evident that the critics employ a double standard. They attack these particular studies not because the research methods differ from, or are inferior to, most studies of family relationships, but because these critics politically oppose equal family rights for lesbians and gay men.

A few studies found that lesbians worry less than heterosexual parents about the gender conformity of their children. Perhaps that helps to account for a few studies that found that sons of lesbians play less aggressively and that children of lesbians communicate their feelings more freely, aspire to a wider range of occupations, and score higher on self-esteem. I think most people would see these as positive things, but some of the critics have misrepresented these differences as evidence that the children are suffering from gender confusion.

Finally, some studies reported that lesbian mothers feel more comfortable discussing sexuality with their children and accepting their children's sexuality, whatever it might be. More to the point are data reported in a 15-year British study. Although few of the young adults identified themselves as gay or lesbian, a larger minority of those with lesbian mothers did report that they had at one time or another considered or actually had engaged in a same-sex relationship.

Are you saying that the social science finds that children of lesbians and gay men are more likely to be gay themselves?

Sexuality is far more complicated than that. Most gay adults, after all, were brought up by straight parents. We are still in the dark ages when it comes to understanding the roots of specific sexual attractions. Regardless of the relative impact of nature and nurture, it seems likely that growing up with gay parents should reduce a child's reluctance to acknowledge, accept, or act upon same-sex sexual desires if they experience them. Because the first generation of children parented by self-identified lesbians or gay men are only now reaching adulthood, it is too soon to know if the finding in that one study will prove to be generally true. Personally, I would not be surprised to find that to be the case.

In 2004, a federal appeals court upheld the Florida law banning adoption by lesbians and gay men. In its opinion, the court cited the Stacey and Biblarz article as saying that the body of research on children of gay parents is methodologically flawed and that children raised by gay parents fare worse on some measures. Did you say that?

That's almost exactly the opposite of what we said. We are aware that conservative activist groups are misrepresenting our work in their efforts to restrict parenting by lesbians and gay men, but it is especially disturbing to see a court mischaracterize what we said.

Our paper discussed a number of the challenges faced by those researching children of gay parents, including the difficulty of drawing a random, representative sample of this population given that the complicated and diverse meanings of gay mean that we can't even know how many gay people there are, and some gay parents might be reluctant to come out because of persistent homophobia. We did not characterize the research as flawed or otherwise suggest that it is not solid, reliable research. In fact, we made it very clear that we sharply disagree with the conservative activists' characterization of the quality of this body of research. There are numerous studies that meet the high standards of the field.

There are other articles out there that not only criticize the studies you cite but also come up with findings that actually say lesbians and gay men should not be parents. Why don't you include those studies in your review?

We were unable to find a single social scientist conducting and publishing research in the area of children's development who claims to have found that gay and lesbian parents harm children. The only legitimate disagreement among scholars concerns the degree of confidence they place in the generalizability of the existing research to all lesbians and gay men.

When people claim that there are studies showing that gay parents harm children, most often they are referring to the work of Paul Cameron. Paul Cameron has been completely discredited as a social scientist. He was dropped from membership in the American Psychological Association and censured by the American Sociological Association for unethical scholarly practices, such as misrepresenting research.

Rarely is there as much consensus in any area of social science as in the case of gay parenting, which is why the American Academy of Pediatrics and all of the major professional organizations with expertise in child welfare have issued reports and resolutions in support of gay and lesbian parental rights.

A few years ago, you and your colleague Tim Biblarz released a review of the then existing studies on lesbian and gay parenting. This review caused a bit of a commotion in the media. Are people representing the review accurately? What did you say in the review that caused so much controversy?

In our review we found that many researchers in this field shied away from studying or analyzing any areas of difference between families with lesbian and gay parents and those with heterosexual parents. In contrast, we emphasized some of the scattered findings of small but interesting differences that have been reported in some of this research, particularly in the areas of gender and sexual conformity. Conservative activists and journalists immediately seized on our discussion of these differences and began to cite these and our article as evidence in support of their efforts to deny partnership and parenting rights to lesbians and gay men. This is a serious misreading and abuse of our work. None of the differences reported in the research apply to child self-esteem, psychological well-being, or social adjustment. Nor were there differences in parents' self-esteem, mental health, or commitment to their children. In other words, even though we noted some differences, we emphasized that the differences were not deficits. In fact, the studies found no negative effects of lesbian and gay parenting, and a few studies reported some differences that could represent a few advantages of lesbian parenting.

What are some of the differences you noted?

Well, for example, several studies find that lesbian co-mothers share family responsibilities more equally than heterosexual married parents, and some research hints that children benefit from egalitarian co-parenting.

By now we have quite robust findings that there is absolutely no reason to be concerned that children of gay parents will be harmed or experience any problems in adjustment. In our review, we concluded:

Because every relevant study to date shows that parental sexual orientation per se has no measurable effect on the quality of parent-child relationships or on children's mental health or social adjustment, there is no evidentiary basis for considering parental sexual orientation in decisions about children's "best interest."

Has there been any new research on children of lesbian and gay parents since the Stacey and Biblarz review article was published?

Since our 2001 article, many new studies have appeared on planned lesbian parenthood, generally couples who had children through donor insemination. We also now have some research with representative national or community samples. And new research on planned gay fatherhood through adoption or surrogacy is under way.

Are there any parental factors that have been shown to negatively impact children?

Some factors in parents have been found consistently to correlate with problems in child development. These include poverty, a low level of parental education, a high level of conflict between parents, and depression in parents. On the other hand, "authoritative" (rather than authoritarian) parenting by emotionally responsive, reliable, and consistent adults generally correlates with positive child outcomes.

Summaries of Leading Social Science Studies on Gay Parenting

What follows are summaries of 25 of the leading studies on lesbian and gay parents and their children that were published in peer-reviewed academic journals. Each summary describes who was studied, how the researchers recruited participants, what the study measured, and the findings of the study. In the interest of making the summaries concise and clear, we exclude details about methodology, as well as the theoretical discussions of the findings. We do not exclude any findings of significant differences between the groups studied.

Some studies have quantitative findings, while others offer descriptive information about the children and their parents. Most of the studies we include are more quantitative in their findings. Though the descriptive studies offer less generalizable conclusions, we include some of them because they offer useful information about the families that were studied. The more quantitative social science research determines whether findings are "statistically significant." A finding (for example, the observed differences between two groups) is described as statistically significant when it can be demonstrated that the probability of obtaining such a difference by chance only is relatively low. We use the term "significant differences" as shorthand for "statistically significant differences." If the studies themselves do not report that differences are significant, then we do not use the term significant.

	Child's Emotional/Psychological Well-Being	Child's Social Adjustment and Peer Relationships	Child's Cognitive Development and School Functioning	Quality of Parent/Child Relationship	Parenting Practices and Attitudes	Parent's Psychological Well-Being	Quality of Relationship between Parents	Child's Gender Behavior	Child's Sexuality
Bigner, 1989.					X				
Bigner, 1992.					X				
Bos, 2004.					X		X		
Brewaeys, 1997.	X			X	X		X	X	
Chan, Brooks, 1998.	X	X				X	X		
Chan, Rahoy, 1998.	X	X			X		X		
Flaks, 1995.	X	X	X		X		X		
Fulcher, 2002.		X							
Golombok, 1983.		X		X	X	X		X	
Golombok, 1996.									X
Golombok, 1997.	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Golombok, 2003.	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Green, 1986.		X	X			X		X	
Hoeffler, 1981.									
Hoveld, 1982.	X	X						X	
Huggins, 1989.	X								
Kirkpatrick, 1981.	X							X	
MacCallum, 2004.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Miller, 1981.					X				
Patterson, 1998.		X							
Patterson, 2004.					X		X		
Tasker, 1995.	X	X		X					X
Vanfraussen, 2002.	X	X							
Vanfraussen, 2003.				X					
Wainright, 2004.	X		X	X				X	X
How many studies include this measure?	13	12	6	8	11	5	7	8	4

Parenting Behaviors of Homosexual and Heterosexual Fathers

JERRY J. BIGNER AND R. BROOKE JACOBSEN (1989)

Summary: This study investigated parenting behaviors of heterosexual and gay fathers. Gay fathers did not differ significantly from heterosexual fathers in terms of overall parental involvement, intimacy, and parenting skills. There were some differences between the groups in approaches to parenting: gay fathers tended to be more communicative with their children, to enforce rules more strictly, and to be more responsive to the perceived needs of children.

Measures: Parenting practices

Types of families: Single-parent heterosexual and gay fathers with at least two children

Bigner and Jacobsen's 1989 study is one of the few studies that focuses on gay fathers. A total of 68 packets were sent to gay fathers in a support group in Denver, Colorado, of which 33 were returned. The 33 gay father participants were then matched with 33 fathers, presumed to be non-gay, who were selected randomly from a large subject pool of participants that had previously participated in a study. The men were all white, had a high level of income, and lived in an urban area. The mean age was 40 years, and the mean level of education was high school graduate. The group included 6 married men, 48 divorced men, 8 men who were separated, and 4 who were never married. All participants had at least two children, and the mean age of the children was 11 years.

Each father was given the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory to complete. The test is composed of 36 items designed to measure five factors: 1) involvement with children, 2) limit-setting, 3) responsiveness, 4) reasoning guidance, and 5) intimacy. Significant differences between the two groups of fathers were found in three factors: 1) limit-setting, 2) responsiveness, and 3) reasoning guidance. Gay fathers tended to be more consistent in setting and enforcing limits on children's behaviors. In addition, they were more likely to promote cognitive skills by explaining rules. They placed greater emphasis on verbal communication and tended to be more responsive to the perceived needs of their children. Although no differences were found in the factors of involvement and intimacy as a whole, differences were found in specific areas. Gay fathers went to greater lengths to act as a resource for activities with children. Also, although gay fathers showed no differences with other fathers in terms of intimacy with children, they were less likely to be affectionate with their partners in front of their children. Gay fathers were more egalitarian and more likely to encourage their children to discuss their fears with them. Overall, however, gay fathers and heterosexual fathers had few differences in parenting abilities and skills.

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Bigner, Jerry J. and R. Brooke Jacobsen, 1989, "Parenting Behaviors of Homosexual and Heterosexual Fathers," *Journal of Homosexuality* 18, 173-186.

Adult Responses to Child Behavior and Attitudes Toward Fathering: Gay and Nongay Fathers

JERRY J. BIGNER AND R. BROOKE JACOBSEN (1992)

Summary: This study explored parenting behaviors and attitudes about fathering of gay and heterosexual fathers and found no differences between the two groups.

Measures: Parenting practices

Types of families: Gay fathers and heterosexual single fathers

This 1992 study looked at parenting behaviors and attitudes toward the role of fathering among gay and heterosexual fathers. The authors recruited 24 self-identified gay fathers from a gay fathers support group. They recruited 29 other men from a support group for single parents. They assumed the men in the single parent support group were heterosexual and did not specifically ask these men about their sexual orientation. Subjects in both groups were mostly well-educated and entirely non-Hispanic white.

The authors used two testing methods. The first was designed to discern attitude toward discipline. This method placed these attitudes into three categories: child-oriented, parent-oriented, and task-oriented. The second measured the fathers' overall parenting styles—traditional vs. developmental. Traditional parenting places less emphasis on training and are more authoritative; developmental emphasizes training children to be self-reliant. The authors found almost no difference between the two groups of fathers. The parenting attitudes of both groups of men leaned heavily toward developmental parenting.

Bigner, Jerry J. and R. Brooke Jacobsen, 1991, "Adult Responses to Child Behavior and Attitudes Toward Fathering: Gay and Nongay Fathers," *Journal of Homosexuality* 23, no. 3, 99-112.

Experience of Parenthood, Couple Relationships, Social Support, and Child-Rearing Goals in Planned Lesbian Mother Families

HENNY M.V. BOS, FRANK VAN BALEN, AND DYMPHNA C. VAN DEN BOOM (2004)

Summary: This study examined whether lesbian families

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differ from heterosexual families with regard to factors believed to influence the parent-child relationship: experience of parenthood, child-rearing goals, couple relationships, and social support. Results showed no differences between lesbian and heterosexual parents in terms of parental competence or burden. Lesbian mothers were found to differ from heterosexual parents in that they viewed conformity as a less important child-rearing goal. It was also found that lesbian nonbiological mothers ("social mothers") were more likely than heterosexual fathers to feel the need to justify their parenting roles.

Measures: Parenting practices and attitudes, quality of relationship between the parents, parents' use of social supports

Types of families: Planned two-parent lesbian families with children conceived by donor insemination and two-parent heterosexual families with conventionally conceived children

This study was conducted in the Netherlands, and compared 100 lesbian two-mother families with children conceived by donor insemination with 100 heterosexual two-parent families in which the children had been conceived naturally. The children in these families had all been raised in their families since birth and were between the ages of four and eight.

Lesbian couples were recruited from all patients of a fertility clinic between 1992 and 1996, a mailing list of a gay parent group, counselors working with gay and lesbian people, and by placing an advertisement in a lesbian magazine. The heterosexual comparison group was drawn from the population register of two cities and through schools and referrals from the lesbian parent group. Families were matched between groups according to degree of urbanization in which they lived, the number of children in the family, and the age and gender of the target children. Researchers used standard questionnaires to measure the experiences of parenthood, the quality of relationship between partners, the use of social support mechanisms (such as reliance on friends or consultation with schoolteachers), and child-rearing goals.

The study found no significant differences between the lesbian biological mothers and the heterosexual mothers in terms of parental competence, burden or justification. As between lesbian social mothers and fathers, there were no differences in parental competence or burden, but lesbian social mothers reported significantly more often than fathers that they felt the need to justify their parenthood. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of couple relationship satisfaction, but lesbian biological mothers expressed more satisfaction with their part-

ner as a co-parent than heterosexual mothers did. There were no significant differences in child-rearing goals with one exception: lesbian parents found it significantly less important than heterosexual parents that their children develop qualities of social conformity. There were no significant differences between lesbian and heterosexual families with regard to use of social support, although among the heterosexual couples, the mothers were more likely than the fathers to use informal social support.

Bos, Henny M.W., Frank van Balen and Dymphna C. van den Boem. 2004. "Experience of Parenthood, Couple Relationships, Social Support, and Child-Rearing Goals in Planned Lesbian Mother Families." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 45, no. 4: 755-764.

Donor Insemination: Child Development and Family Functioning in Lesbian Mother Families

A. BREWAEYS, I. PONJAERT, E.Y. VAN HALL, AND S. COLOMBROK (1997)

Summary: This study found no differences in the adjustment or gender role development of children of lesbian mothers compared to children raised by heterosexual parents. It found that lesbian non-biological mothers had better relationships with their children than the heterosexual fathers did. And it found that biological mothers experienced more positive feelings than lesbian non-biological mothers and heterosexual fathers.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, parenting practices, quality of parent-child relationship, child's gender behavior

Types of families: Lesbian donor-inseminated, heterosexual donor-inseminated, heterosexual conventionally conceived

This study looked at 30 lesbian couple families who conceived via donor-insemination, 38 heterosexual couple families who conceived via donor insemination, and 30 heterosexual couple families who conceived naturally. Each family had a child between four and eight years old. The families were recruited from all families that had attended two Belgian fertility clinics during a sex-year period. Most of the demographics of the groups, such as the mean age of the mother, the mean age of the children, and the number of children in the family, did not differ greatly. There were some differences in education levels and genders of the children, but in general, sexual orientation and means of conception were the only differences between the groups. The biological mothers were interviewed and the children were given a psychological assessment.

The researchers measured the quality of the parent-child relationship through a standardized interview of the parents. Data was also obtained about the division of professional and child care activities and the extent to which partners were helpful with disciplinary issues. The child's own perception of his/her relationship with each parent was measured using a standard family relations test. The emotional and behavioral adjustment of the child was measured via a standard parental report instrument (CBCL), and the gender role behavior of the child was assessed using the Preschool Activities Inventory, a standardized measure to assess stereotypically masculine and feminine behaviors.

No differences were found in the quality of the biological mother and child relationships between the three groups, but there were some significant differences among the nonbiological mothers, nonbiological fathers, and biological fathers. The nonbiological lesbian mothers were found to have significantly better relationships with the children than either of the groups of fathers. Similarly, the lesbian nonbiological mothers were found to be significantly more involved in practical childcare activities and with disciplinary issues than either group of fathers.

Among the children, no difference was found between the lesbian mother group and either heterosexual group in terms of emotional or behavioral problems, gender role development, or the children's feelings for their biological mothers versus their fathers/nonbiological mothers. In all groups, however, the biological mother received a greater quantity of positive feelings than the other parent (the nonbiological lesbian mothers or either group of fathers).

Brewaeys, A., I. Ponjaert, E.V. Van Hall and S. Golombok. 2004. "Donor Insemination: Child Development and Family Functioning in Lesbian Mother Families." *Human Reproduction* 12, no. 6: 1349-1359.

Division of Labor Among Lesbian and Heterosexual Parents: Associations with Children's Adjustment

RAYMOND W. CHAN, RISA C. BROOKS, BARBARA RABOY, AND CHARLOTTE J. PATTERSON (1998)

Summary: This study found that lesbian couples and heterosexual couples reported even splits of household labor and decision-making. In the area of childcare, the heterosexual couples had a less equal distribution of responsibilities, with the mothers generally taking a larger role. There were no differences between the groups of children in their social adjustment with peers.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's social adjustment, parent's psychological

well-being, quality of relationship between parents

Types of families: Lesbian and heterosexual couples who conceived through donor insemination

This study compared the division of family labor between lesbian-headed families and heterosexual-headed families, all of whom conceived via donor insemination. All the children were elementary school-aged at the time of the study. The study looked at the overall level of satisfaction in the couples' relationships and the impact of this variable on the psychological adjustment of sons and daughters. Thirty lesbian and 16 heterosexual couples, with a total of 30 boys and 16 girls, participated in the study. Participating families were drawn from the former clients of The Sperm Bank of California. All of the parents were predominantly well-educated, non-Hispanic white, and relatively affluent. The lesbian mothers had a slightly higher level of education.

To assess division of labor in the household and satisfaction with that division, the authors used a test that measures actual and ideal distribution of household tasks, family decision-making, and child care tasks. To assess the couples' relationship quality, the study used another psychological test designed to measure relationship adjustment. Finally, the authors used a standardized questionnaire to measure love, emotional attachment, and conflict. Children's social competence and behavior were measured through standardized questionnaires given both to the child's biological mother and to the child's teacher.

The study found some significant differences between the lesbian and heterosexual couples. Both the lesbian and the heterosexual couples shared household tasks and made decisions in a relatively egalitarian fashion. However, the lesbian couples split the child care responsibilities more equally than the heterosexual couples. The heterosexual mothers performed the majority of the child-care tasks in their families. Moreover, the lesbian couples placed a high value on an equal distribution of household and decision-making tasks and were generally pleased with their current family situation. The heterosexual mothers generally wanted their husbands to take more responsibility for child care, but the fathers reported leaving this to their wives. For this reason, the fathers generally reported satisfaction with child care arrangements, and the mothers reported dissatisfaction. Despite the heterosexual mothers' desire for more egalitarian distribution of child care tasks, both the lesbian and the heterosexual parents showed equal levels of satisfaction with their relationships and their participation in household tasks.

Both groups of parents had relationship adjustment scores above the national average. Also, all of the parents reported high levels of love and low or moderate levels of conflict; there were no significant differences in reported love or conflict between the lesbian and heterosexual couples. No differences were found between the children of heterosexual parents and the children of lesbian

parents when it came to the ability of the children to relate with peers and the existence of behavioral problems.

Chan, Raymond W., Risa C. Brooks, Barbara Raboy and Charlotte J. Patterson. 1998. "Division of Labor Among Lesbian and Heterosexual Parents: Associations with Children's Adjustment." *Journal of Family Psychology* 12, no. 3: 402-419.

Psychosocial Adjustment among Children Conceived via Donor Insemination by Lesbian and Heterosexual Mothers

RAYMOND W. CHAN, BARBARA RABOY, AND CHARLOTTE J. PATTERSON (1998)

Summary: This study found that the sexual orientation and relationship status of parents had no significant impact on the psychological well-being of their children. Rather, children were impacted by other factors, such as parents' psychological well-being and parenting stress—neither of which correlated with sexual orientation.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's social adjustment, parents' psychological well-being

Types of families: Lesbian single mothers and couples, heterosexual single mothers and couples, all of whom conceived through donor insemination

This study compared lesbian single mothers, lesbian mother couples, heterosexual single mothers, and heterosexual parent couples who conceived children via donor insemination. The children were compared in terms of psychological well-being and social adjustment, and the parents were compared in terms of psychological well-being and, when applicable, couples' relationships.

Participants were recruited from The Sperm Bank of California. All clients who had conceived children who were at least five years old were contacted. The researchers obtained a sample of 34 lesbian couples, 21 lesbian single mothers, 16 heterosexual couples, and 9 heterosexual single mothers. Demographically, the families were very similar: they were mostly well-educated, employed at least part time, and had family incomes above national averages. Both the lesbian biological mothers and nonbiological mothers were more educated than the heterosexual biological mothers and nonbiological fathers, respectively. The couples had higher annual household incomes than the single mothers. There were no other significant demographic differences.

Parents and the children's teachers were given standard questionnaires to evaluate the children's social adjustment and behavioral problems. The questionnaires assessed social competence, the way children handle their problems, total behavior problems, academic performance, and ability to adapt to different situations. Parents were evaluated for parenting stress, depressive symptoms, and self-esteem. In addition, for families headed by couples, various tests were used to assess their relationships—relationship satisfaction and amount of conflict.

The results showed that the parents and the children in each group were well-adjusted, regardless of sexual orientation and whether or not their mothers had partners. Nonbiological lesbian mothers were more likely to report behavior problems in their children than the nonbiological heterosexual fathers. Parents and teachers' reports of children's behavior problems did not correlate with parents' sexual orientation but did correlate with parents' stress. Among the couples, parents who reported greater satisfaction with their relationship, higher levels of love, and lower inter-parental conflict had children who were better adjusted.

Chan, Raymond W., Barbara Raboy and Charlotte J. Patterson. 1998. "Psychosocial Adjustment Among Children Conceived via Donor Insemination by Lesbian and Heterosexual Mothers." *Child Development* 69, no. 2 (April): 443-457.

Lesbians Choosing Motherhood: A Comparative Study of Lesbian and Heterosexual Parents and Their Children

DAVID K. FLAKS, JDA FICHER, FRANK MASTERPASQUA, AND GREGORY JOSEPH (1995)

Summary: This study found that children of lesbians and children of heterosexuals were equally healthy in terms of psychological well-being and social adjustment. The lesbian mothers were found to have more developed parenting awareness skills than the heterosexual parents. And the lesbian couples showed higher levels of cohesion and the heterosexual couples showed lower levels of consensus.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's social adjustment, parenting practices, quality of relationship between parents

Types of families: Lesbian donor-inseminated couples, heterosexual couples who conceived conventionally

In this study, the researchers compared lesbian donor-inseminated couples with heterosexual couples who conceived conventionally. The research focused on the

children's psychological well-being and social adjustment, as well as parenting practices and the parents' relationships.

Subjects were recruited through a lesbian mother support group, advertisements in publications including a lesbian newspaper and newsletters of women's organizations and gay and lesbian parenting groups, friendship networks, professional referrals, and referrals from other participants. The researchers used these criteria for choosing the couples: 1) the lesbian couple must be two self-identified lesbians living together with their children in an ongoing relationship, 2) the lesbian couples were required to have used donor insemination, 3) the heterosexual couples must be married and living together with their biological children in an ongoing relationship, and 4) each couple must have had at least one child between three and ten years old. Fifteen lesbian couples and 15 heterosexual couples were selected. Each lesbian couple was then matched with the most similar heterosexual couple on the variables of sex, age, and birth order of the children as well as on race, educational level, and income of the parents. Each parent group had 8 girls and 7 boys; a total of 30 children were studied.

Most of the families who participated in the study lived in Pennsylvania. They were all white, mostly well-educated, employed at least part time, and had been living with their partners for similar lengths of time. The only difference was that the lesbian parents were somewhat older than the heterosexual parents. Each group of children had a mean age of 5.8 years and, for the most part, were in the same grades at school.

Standardized questionnaires were given to the parents and the teachers, measuring the children's cognitive functioning, behavioral adjustment, social adjustment, performance in school, and well-being. A standardized questionnaire given to parents evaluated the couple relationships—level of agreement, affection, satisfaction, and cohesion. And parenting skills, sensitivity, and effectiveness were assessed through a standardized interview.

The tests showed that parents' sexual orientation did not affect the cognitive and behavioral functioning of the children. The tests also showed that the lesbian mothers had significantly more parenting skills than the heterosexual parents, specifically in terms of the ability to recognize a child care problem and formulate acceptable solutions. This difference related to gender, not sexual orientation, as both lesbian and heterosexual women demonstrated superior awareness of parenting skills to that of heterosexual fathers. There were no differences in the relationship quality between the two groups except that the lesbian couples showed significantly higher cohesion and the heterosexual couples showed significantly lower levels of consensus.

Fields, David K., Ida Ficher, Frank Masterpasqua and Gregory Joseph. 1995. "Lesbians Choosing Motherhood: A Comparative Study of Lesbian and Heterosexual Parents and Their Children." *Developmental Psychology* 31, no. 1: 105-114.

Contact with Grandparents among Children Conceived via Donor Insemination by Lesbian and Heterosexual Mothers

MEGAN FULCHER, RAYMOND W. CHAN, BARBARA RABOY,
AND CHARLOTTE J. PATTERSON (2002)

Summary: This study found that the children of lesbian mothers were as likely to have contact with their grandparents as the children of heterosexual parents. In addition, there was no significant difference between the amount of contact the children had with other related or nonrelated adults. But there were significant differences in grandparent contact based on biological relatedness.

Measures: Children's contact with grandparents and other related and unrelated adults

Types of families: Lesbian single mothers and couples, heterosexual single mothers and couples, all of whom conceived through donor insemination

This study compared lesbian single mothers and couples, heterosexual single mothers and couples, all of whom conceived through donor insemination. The children were compared in terms of their contact with grandparents, as well as their contact with other important related and nonrelated adults. Participants were recruited from a list of former clients of The Sperm Bank of California. The researchers obtained a sample of 49 lesbian couples, 6 lesbian single mothers, 17 heterosexual couples, and 8 heterosexual single mothers. All clients had conceived and given birth prior to July 1990. The children averaged seven years of age and biological mothers averaged forty-two years of age; the children of single parents were significantly older than those of coupled parents, and the single mothers were significantly older than coupled mothers. The parents were generally well-educated, employed at least part time, and relatively affluent. Lesbian biological mothers were more educated than heterosexual mothers, and lesbian nonbiological mothers were more educated than non-biological fathers.

The data was obtained through a structured telephone interview about family background, current family status, and contact with grandparents and other adults. Contact was defined as a visit, telephone call, card, or e-mail, ranging from "no contact" to "daily contact." The mother reported where each grandparent lived. Geographic proximity scores ranged from "in the house" to "out of the country." Parents also listed 5 adults, in addition to parents and grandparents, who were seen as important in the child's life.

This study found that most children were in regular contact with their grandparents, regardless of their parents' sexual orientation or relationship status. Most

parents also reported that their children had a substantial social network of both related and unrelated adults. The amount of contact did not differ significantly in the two family types. There was also no difference in the number of adult men with whom either group of children had contact. Regardless of parental sexual orientation, significantly more children were reported to be in regular contact with their biological grandparents as compared to their nonbiological grandparents.

Fulcher, Megan, Raymond W. Chan, Barbara Raboy and Charlotte J. Patterson, 2002. "Contact with Grandparents among Children Conceived via Donor Insemination by Lesbian and Heterosexual Mothers." *Parenting: Science and Practice* 2, no. 1: 61-76

Children in Lesbian and Single-Parent Households: Psychosexual and Psychiatric Appraisal

SUSAN GOLOMBOK, ANN SPENCER, AND MICHAEL RUTLER (1983)

Summary: This study found no significant differences between children raised by lesbians and children raised by single heterosexual mothers on measures of emotions, behavior, relationships with peers, gender identity, or gender behavior.

Measures: Child's social adjustment, quality of parent-child relationship, parenting practices, parent's psychological well-being, child's gender behavior

Types of families: Divorced lesbian and heterosexual mothers

This study compared 37 children reared in lesbian mother households (a combination of single and coupled mothers) with 38 children being raised in heterosexual, single-mother households. In each group there were 27 parents. The children were five to seventeen years old, and their average age was nine to ten years. The two groups of parents had equally mixed vocations, though the lesbians tended to have more education, and more were in professional occupations. The children of the lesbian mothers had more contact with their fathers than the children of the heterosexual mothers. The authors recruited their families through advertisements in a range of gay and single-parent publications and through contacts with gay and single-parent organizations.

The mothers and the children were interviewed individually by psychologists who administered standardized interviews to assess various aspects of personal and family functioning. One section of the interview was specific to lesbian mothers with partners, who were asked a series of questions about household activities and division of labor and the quality of their relationship. The portions of the interviews pertaining to the child's psychiatric state, peer relationships and sexual orientation were conducted separately by a child psychiatrist, who

did not know the mother's sexual orientation. To determine gender behavior, the authors interviewed mothers and children about the children's preferred toys and play activities (e.g. playing tea party versus cops and robbers). Interviews also collected data about children's friendship patterns, their feelings about their gender, and the mothers' activities with their children. Additionally, the parents filled out two standardized questionnaires. One was called the "malaise inventory," and measured emotional stability in the mothers, and the other questionnaire assessed the children's emotions, behavior, and peer relationships. Finally, the children's teachers filled out similar questionnaires assessing the child's well-being and behavior.

The lesbian mothers and heterosexual mothers did not differ significantly on any of the measures reflecting current psychiatric status. The lesbian mothers had slightly lower (i.e. more normal) scores on the malaise inventory than the heterosexual mothers. Significantly more of the lesbian mothers reported receiving psychiatric therapy at some time during their adult life, and slightly more had taken anti-depressant medication during the previous year. Systemic ratings of mothers' warmth to their children did not show differences between the groups. Fourteen of the lesbian mothers lived with a partner. Rating schemes determined that the great majority of these relationships were harmonious. In almost every case the two women shared parenting and housekeeping roles.

The mean scores on assessments of the children's behavior by both parents and teachers showed no significant differences between the two groups of children. However, in the heterosexual mother group, substantially more children (8 out of 38) showed significant psychiatric problems compared with children raised by lesbians (2 out of 31). There were no significant differences in either group of children's overall ability to make and maintain healthy relationships with people of their own age. There was no evidence that any child in the study identified him or herself as the opposite sex. Additionally, boys and girls in both groups had closely similar scores in the scales testing for stereotypically masculine and feminine behavior. The prepubescent children in both groups tended to have friends that were predominantly of their own sex, and almost all reported having a best friend of the same sex. All the pubescent and post-pubescent children in the study reported having either heterosexual sexual interests or no definite interests.

Golombok Susan, Ann Spencer and Michael Rutter, "Children in Lesbian and Single-Parent Households: Psychosexual and Psychiatric Appraisal". 1989. *Journal of Child Psychology* 24, no. 4: 551-572.

Do Parents Influence the Sexual Orientation of Their Children? Findings from a Longitudinal Study of Lesbian Families

SUSAN GOLOMBOK AND FIONA TASKER (1996)

Summary: This study found no significant difference between the number of self-identified lesbian and gay young adults from lesbian-headed families and from heterosexual-headed families. Similarly, no significant difference was found between the two groups in those who reported experiencing same-sex attraction. Daughters of lesbians, however, were significantly more likely to report being open to same-sex attractions or relationships. Children of lesbians were significantly more likely to have had a same-sex sexual experience.

Measures: Child's sexuality

Types of families: Single and divorced lesbian and heterosexual mothers

This study is a follow-up of Golombok and Tasker's previous studies, which took place in 1976-1977. In the first study, 27 lesbian mothers and their 39 children, and 27 heterosexual mothers and their 39 children were investigated (data from three of these children were not reported in the original study but are included here). These original participants were recruited from lesbian and single-parent organizations and could not participate if there was an adult male living in the home. At that time, the children had a mean age of 9.5 years.

In this 1991-92 follow-up, the children had a mean age of 23.5 years. Of the original participants, only 25 children of lesbian mothers (8 men and 17 women) and 21 children of heterosexual mothers (12 men and 9 women) agreed to participate. The participants from lesbian and heterosexual families were similar with respect to age, gender, ethnicity, and education. Also, most of the children in both groups had lived in a step-family during their adolescent years.

The participants were interviewed individually. The researchers divided "sexual orientation" into four areas: 1) the presence of same-sex attraction (objects of crushes, etc.), 2) consideration of a same-sex relationship as a future possibility (this did not necessarily involve actual desire), 3) same-sex sexual experience (could be anything from a single kiss to cohabitation lasting over one year), and 4) self-identification as heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, or gay. The researchers then used two rating systems, a composite same-sex sexual interest rating, and a Kinsey scale rating (a continuum of sexuality from exclusively homosexual to exclusively heterosexual).

No significant differences were found in terms of self-identification as gay or lesbian, and no significant differences were found in terms of reported same-sex sexual attraction. There were, however, differences in two areas. The participants raised by lesbians were more likely to have had a sexual relationship with some-

one of the same sex (5 daughters and 1 son from lesbian families, no children from heterosexual families). Also, significantly more of the daughters from lesbian families had previously considered or thought it a future possibility to have same-sex sexual attraction or a same-sex relationship. All of the participants had experienced at least one opposite-sex sexual relationship.

Golombok Susan, and Fiona Tasker. 1996. "Do Parents Influence the Sexual Orientation of Their Children? Findings from a Longitudinal Study of Lesbian Families." *Developmental Psychology* 32, no. 1: 3-11.

Children Raised in Fatherless Families from Infancy: Family Relationships and the Socioemotional Development of Children of Lesbian and Single Heterosexual Mothers

SUSAN COLOMBOK, FIONA TASKER, AND CLARE MURRAY (1997)

Summary: This study found that children raised from infancy in families without fathers, both by lesbian mothers and by single heterosexual mothers, experienced greater warmth and mother-child interaction than children from father-present families. They also felt more secure in their attachment to their parents than their peers. There was no significant difference in the presence of behavioral problems, but children raised in fatherless families reported feeling less physically and cognitively competent than their peers. Disputes between mothers and their children in families without fathers were no more frequent but more severe than in father-present families.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's social adjustment, parenting practices and attitudes, parent's psychological well-being

Types of families: Single and coupled lesbian mothers, single heterosexual mothers, and heterosexual couples

This study compared children raised by lesbian mothers, single heterosexual mothers, and heterosexual couples. Thirty lesbian mother families participated half of which were headed by single women and half of which were headed by a couple. The lesbian mothers were recruited by the researchers who drew from the families they had contacted for previous studies. Forty-two families headed by a single heterosexual mother were recruited through articles published in the

national press. Forty-one two-parent heterosexual families were recruited from maternity ward records and were selected based on their comparability to the other family types. The average age of the children was six, and in the lesbian and single heterosexual mother families, the children had been raised without a father from birth. None of the families were experiencing economic hardship. The heterosexual families had a higher proportion of working class families. There were fewer children in the lesbian and single heterosexual mother families. All the families were predominately white.

Standardized tests were given to the mothers and questionnaires were given to the children's schoolteachers. The researchers measured the mothers' psychological state, which included levels of stress, anxiety and depression. They measured the quality of parenting, levels of warmth exhibited by the mothers, mother-child interaction, and the level of emotional involvement mothers had with their children. They also measured children's psychological well-being—emotional problems, behavior problems, relationships, and their perceptions of their attachment with their parents.

The results showed the mothers' psychological state to be similar in all three groups. Mothers in families without fathers exhibited greater levels of warmth than the mothers of father-present families. There was no difference in warmth between the lesbian mothers and the single heterosexual mothers. Mothers in families without fathers also showed greater parent-child interaction, lesbian mothers having a higher level than heterosexual single mothers. There was no difference between the lesbian and single heterosexual mothers in terms of emotional involvement with the child. There were no differences in the frequency with which mothers disciplined their children, but disputes between mothers and their children in families without fathers were more severe than in father-present families. There was no difference in the seriousness of the disputes between lesbian and single heterosexual mothers. Most of the children in all groups scored below the cut-off point for emotional or behavioral problems. The scores of children in families without fathers reflected greater security of attachment than their peers. But children in these families perceived themselves as less physically and cognitively competent than children in father-present homes.

Golombok, Susan, Fiona Tasker and Claire Murray, 1997. "Children Raised in Fatherless Families from Infancy: Family Relationships and the Socioemotional Development of Children of Lesbian and Single Heterosexual Mothers." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines* 38, no. 7: 783-791.

Children with Lesbian Parents: A Community Study

SUSAN GOLOMBOK, BETH PERRY, AMANDA BURSTON, CLARE MURRAY, JULIE MOONEY-SOMERS, MADELEINE STEVENS, AND JEAN GOLDING (2003)

Summary: This study, drawn from a large representative sample, found that there were no significant differences between children raised by lesbian and heterosexual parents in terms of the quality of the mother-child relationships, the level of adjustment, and gender development. It also found no differences in parents' psychological state or relationship satisfaction based on sexual orientation. And it found that lesbian mothers were less likely than heterosexual parents to hit their children.

Measures: Quality of parent-child relationship, child's psychological well-being, parents' psychological well-being, child's gender role behavior

Types of families: Lesbian-mother (some single, some coupled), heterosexual couple, and single heterosexual mother families

The study examined mother-child relationships, parents' psychological well-being, child adjustment and child gender role behavior in lesbian-mother, heterosexual two parent, and heterosexual single mother families. The researchers drew their sample from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC), a study of all women in Avon, England who were expecting a baby between April 1, 1991, and December 31, 1992. The population of Avon is similar to the larger national population of England. Additional subjects were identified by snowballing procedures and through a local lesbian mothers' support group, a local lesbian and gay organization, and newspaper advertisements. The sample included 39 lesbian-mother families (20 single, 19 with partners), 74 two-parent heterosexual families, and 60 single heterosexual mother families. The children were between the ages of five and seven. Standardized interviews and questionnaires were administered to biological mothers, lesbian non-biological mothers ("co-mothers"/fathers, children, and teachers measuring the quality of the parenting, children's socioemotional adjustment, parents' psychological state, and children's gender role behavior.

With respect to parenting, co-mothers, as compared with heterosexual fathers, were significantly less likely to hit children and showed a tendency toward less frequent disputes. Similarly, lesbian mothers were less likely than heterosexual mothers to hit their children. Lesbian mothers also engaged in imaginative and domestic play more frequently with children than did heterosexual mothers. Co-mothers were less likely than fathers to show raised levels of emotional involvement but reported similar or higher levels of involvement in play. Parental sexual orientation did not account for any significant differences with respect to children's socioemotional adjustment. There were no significant differences among any of the groups in children's psychiatric disorders. There

There were no differences in parents' psychological state based on sexual orientation. There were no differences in the relationship satisfaction between lesbian and heterosexual mothers. No significant differences between lesbian and heterosexual mothers were identified with respect to children's gender development. Single mothers, in general, reported more negative relationships with their children than did mothers in two parent families, regardless of parents' sexual orientation. Teachers also reported a greater degree of psychological problems of children in single parent families.

Golombok, Susan, Beth Perry, Amanda Bursston, Clare Murray, Julie Mooney-Somers, Madeleine Stevens and Jean Golding. 2003. "Children with Lesbian Parents: A Community Study." *Developmental Psychology* 39, no. 1.

Lesbian Mothers and Their Children: A Comparison with Solo Parent Heterosexual Mothers and Their Children

RICHARD GREEN, JANE BARCLAY MANDEL, MARY E. HOTVEDT, JAMES GRAY, AND LAUREL SMITH (1986)

Summary: This study found that children of lesbians and children of heterosexual single mothers show no differences in I.Q., gender identity, and social adjustment with peers. Some differences were detected in gender behavior: daughters of lesbians were found to be less confined in their choices by stereotypical notions of feminine- and masculine-appropriate behavior. Some significant differences were detected between the mothers themselves. Lesbian mothers had higher levels of self-confidence and sought more leadership roles, while the heterosexual mothers had lower self-confidence and sought subordinate roles.

Measures: Child's social adjustment, parent's psychological well-being, child's gender behavior, child's cognitive development

Types of families: Lesbian mothers (some with partners) and heterosexual mothers who were divorced, separated, or never married

This study explored the gender identity and gender behavior of children in lesbian mother families. The subjects were recruited from women's groups and friendship networks in ten states. They included 50 lesbians and their 56 children (30 girls and 26 boys) and 40 heterosexual women and their 48 children (28 girls and 20 boys) from ten states. Each mother had to be currently unmarried, the legal custodian of

at least one child between three and eleven years, and have no adult male living in the house. The groups were matched in terms of mothers' age and race, children's sex and age, length of time separated from the husband/father, mother's current marital status, current family income, mother's educational level, and amount of time an adult male had not been living in the household. The children had a mean age of eight years. The mothers were white women between the ages of 25 and 46 and had been single for at least two years with a mean of four years. The majority were separated or divorced, although 3 of the lesbians were widowed, and 10% of both groups had never married. Income and occupation ranged from the unemployed on welfare to professionals who earned over \$2000 a month; the median income was \$850 per month. The majority of women worked at least part time, and education ranged greatly with the average having at least two years of college.

The mothers were given questionnaires that measured child raising, parenting experiences, marital and romantic relationships, and attitudes about divorce, sex roles, sex education of the children, and child discipline. They were also given personality tests and tests that measure gender behavior. In addition, mothers completed questionnaires about their children that covered gender identity, peer group popularity, and preferred play activities. The children's intelligence was measured, their gender identity was evaluated, and their gender behavior was assessed through toy and activity preferences.

The lesbian mothers scored higher on self-confidence, seeking leadership roles, and eliciting attention from others while heterosexual mothers scored higher on abasement and seeking subordinate roles. The lesbian mothers were more likely than the heterosexual mothers to have been less sex stereotyped as children and adults. There were no significant differences in the I.Q. of the children in the two groups. No differences were found between the two groups of children in terms of gender identity. With respect to children's gender development, none of the children in the study met the criteria for gender identity disorder. As for gender role behavior, differences were noted in a few areas. The daughters of lesbians were more likely than the daughters of heterosexuals to engage in a wider range of play behaviors, e.g., showing interest in toys and activities that are considered traditionally masculine in addition to those that are traditionally feminine. And sons and daughters of lesbians were more likely than heterosexual mothers' children to prefer playing with children of both sexes as opposed to just same-sex playmates.

Green, Richard, Jane Barclay Mandel, Mary E. Hotvedt, James Gray and Laurel Smith. 1986. Lesbian Mothers and Their Children: A Comparison with Solo Parent Heterosexual Mothers and Their Children. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 15, no. 2 : 167-185.

Children's Acquisition of Sex-Role Behavior in Lesbian-Mother Families

BEVERLY HOFFER (1981)

Summary: This study found no significant differences between the gender behavior of children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers. It also found that lesbian mothers were significantly more likely to prefer a more equal mix of masculine and feminine toys, while heterosexual mothers tended to prefer that girls play with stereotypically feminine toys and boys play with stereotypically masculine toys.

Measures: Child's gender behavior and parent's preference for child's gender behavior/sexuality

Types of families: Lesbian mothers and single heterosexual mothers

This 1981 study examined the gender behavior of the children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers as well as the mothers' preference and influence on their children's gender behavior and sexuality. The study consisted of 20 lesbian and 20 heterosexual single mothers from the San Francisco Bay area whose oldest or only child was between six and nine years old. All of the children were white, raised in the United States, and their fathers had left the household by the time they were five years old. The groups were matched by age and gender, so that each group had 10 boys and 10 girls. There were no significant differences between the families in terms of marital status, educational background, or occupation. Most had at least a college degree, were separated or divorced, and worked in a white-collar occupation. All were white. The only major difference between the two groups is that while 95% of the lesbian mothers identified moderately or strongly with feminism, just 55% of the heterosexual mothers did so.

The children were tested for gender-classified toy preferences using a toy preference test, which consisted of showing children photographs of gender-typed masculine (e.g., toy snakes, trucks), feminine (e.g., dolls, tea sets), and neutral toys (e.g., sea shells, puzzles) to determine the child's preferences. The mothers were asked to choose the toys with which they would prefer their children to play. The mothers were also given a test to determine their attitudes toward the toys with which their children played.

No significant differences were found between the gender identity of children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers. The boys of both groups preferred masculine and neutral toys and girls preferred feminine and neutral toys. However, the mother's sexual orientation correlated with their preference of toys for their children. Lesbian mothers generally did not base their preferences for toys on their

child's gender, but heterosexual mothers tended to prefer masculine sex-typed toys for their boys and feminine sex-typed toys for their girls. Lesbian mothers were found to prefer a more equal mixture of masculine and feminine toys for their children than did heterosexual mothers.

Hoeller, Beverly, 1981, "Children's Acquisition of Sex-Role Behavior in Lesbian-Mother Families," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 51, no. 3: 536-544.

Children of Lesbian Mothers

MARY E. HOTVEDT AND JANE BARCLAY MANDEL (1982)

Summary: No significant differences were found between children of divorced lesbian and heterosexual mothers in terms of general well-being and relationships with peers. There were no differences between boys in terms of gender behavior, but daughters of lesbians tended to have preferences in play and career choice that were not confined by traditional notions of female toys and occupations.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's social adjustment, child's gender behavior

Types of families: Divorced, separated, or widowed lesbian and heterosexual mothers

In this article, the authors report preliminary findings of their study of divorced, separated, or widowed lesbian and heterosexual mothers. Participants were selected from ten states representing the Northeast, Midwest, and South and came from both rural and urban areas. Lesbian mothers were required to be self-identified lesbians, have custody or joint custody of at least one child between the ages of three and eleven, and have had no adult male in the house for at least two years. Heterosexual mothers were matched with the lesbian mothers on the basis of the mother's age and race, the children's age and sex, length of time separated from father, marital status (never married, divorced, separated, widowed), income level of the family, education level of the mother, and (when possible) mother's religion of upbringing. All of the participants were white and had been living as single parents for an average of four to five years. Income and occupation ranged from unemployed and on welfare to full-time professional women earning up to \$2000 per month. Education ranged greatly, but most participants had at least one year of college. The authors do not provide information about how subjects were recruited.

Each participant was required to fill out questionnaires and attitude/personality scales that measured parenting experiences, upbringing, marital and relation-

ship patterns, and attitudes toward divorce, gender roles, sex education for children, and discipline. Children were interviewed and tested in the home on gender behavior, play preferences, friendships, television habits, and thoughts about adulthood.

No differences were found between the two groups of children in terms of the sex of their closest friends. Daughters of lesbian mothers tended to rate themselves more popular with other children than daughters of heterosexual mothers did; however, there were no differences between the two groups of sons. There were also no signs of gender identity confusion. The daughters of lesbians scored as less traditionally feminine, but not masculine, on a number of items. For example, they tended to pick possible careers that were not traditionally female occupations and engaged in somewhat wider variety of play than the other daughters.

Holvett, Mary E., and Jane Barclay Mandel. 1982. "Children of Lesbian Mothers," in *Homosexuality, Social, Psychological, and Biological Issues*, ed. W. Paul, 275-285. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

A Comparative Study of Self-Esteem of Adolescent Children of Divorced Lesbian Mothers and Divorced Heterosexual Mothers

SHARON L. HUGGINS (1989)

Summary: This study found no significant difference in the level of self-esteem of children with heterosexual mothers and children with lesbian mothers.

Measures: Child's self-esteem

Types of families: Divorced lesbian and heterosexual mothers

Huggins explored the self-esteem of 36 adolescent children, ages thirteen to nineteen years: 18 of the children lived with divorced heterosexual mothers and 18 lived with divorced lesbian mothers. Half of the children in each category were girls and half were boys. All children and their mothers were non-Hispanic white and lived in Southern California. Huggins recruited the families through solicitation and personal referral by the study participants. The study used a 58-item inventory that has been used in several self-esteem studies since 1967. A higher score on the inventory corresponds to a higher self-esteem. Huggins interviewed the adolescents and their mothers, and all the adolescents completed the self-esteem inventory.

There was no significant difference in the self-esteem of children with lesbian mothers and children with heterosexual mothers. However, children of both lesbian mothers and heterosexual mothers had higher self-esteem scores if their mothers were currently living with a partner or remarried.

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Huggins, Sharon L., "A Comparative Study of Self-Esteem of Adolescent Children of Divorced Lesbian Mothers and Divorced Heterosexual Mothers," in *Homosexuality and the Family*, ed. F.W. Bozett, 123-135. New York: Haworth.

Lesbian Mothers and Their Children: A Comparative Survey

MARTHA KIRKPATRICK, CATHERINE SMITH, AND RON ROY (1981)

Summary: This study found no difference between children of lesbian mothers and children of single heterosexual mothers in psychological well-being or gender behavior.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's gender behavior

Types of families: Lesbian and heterosexual mothers, most of whom were divorced

This study investigated the children of lesbian and heterosexual women through the observations of two psychiatrists and one psychologist. Two of the professionals were not aware of the sexual orientation of the child's mother until the evaluations were completed. Participants included 40 children, 10 sons and 10 daughters of lesbian mothers, and 10 sons and 10 daughters of single heterosexual mothers. All children were between the ages of five and twelve. The mothers were contacted through friendship circles and through a local National Organization of Women (NOW) newsletter. Subjects were offered free psychological evaluations.

Half of the lesbian mothers lived with a partner. Few of the heterosexual mothers had partners living in the home. The two groups of mothers were found to be similar in their socioeconomic status and occupational history, age at marriage and length of marriage, pregnancy and delivery histories, and age at children's birth. The heterosexual mothers tended to have larger families due to remarriages or children after divorce. Almost all the mothers were working, in school, or both. Both groups were also similar in the age of child at family separation and the length of time since separation except for two children in the lesbian groups who never had a father in the home. Fathers' involvement with the children was comparable in the two groups. There were seven "only children" in the lesbian mother group and none in the heterosexual mother group.

Children's psychological well-being and gender behavior were extensively evaluated through tests and a 45-minute interview. The results between the two groups were found to be "remarkably" similar. There were no significant differ-

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ences in the level of emotional disturbance or types or frequency of pathology. Gender evaluations were based on historical data of favorite toys and games, the sex of closest friends, a human figure drawing test, and responses to questions concerning gender, current interests, and future roles. There was no difference between the two groups of children in terms of gender behavior. The researchers found that lesbian mothers tended to be more concerned than heterosexual mothers with providing their children with male figures in their lives.

Kirkpatrick, Martha, Catherine Smith, and Ren Roy. 1981. "Lesbian Mothers and Their Children: A Comparative Survey." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 91, no. 3 (July): 545-551.

Children Raised in Fatherless Families from Infancy: A Follow-Up of Children of Lesbian and Single Heterosexual Mothers at Early Adolescence

FIONA MACCALLUM AND SUSAN GOLOMBOK (2004)

Summary: This study was a follow-up to an earlier study and compared lesbian mother families, single heterosexual mother families, and two-parent heterosexual families to examine how adolescent children are affected by having been raised in a family without a father. Overall, results showed that the absence of a father does not negatively affect children's social and emotional development in adolescence. Children in families without fathers regarded their mothers as sharing more interests and activities with them, more available, and more dependable than children in two-parent heterosexual families. And mothers in families without fathers reported more serious disputes with their children and more irritability and loss of temper during disciplinary interactions. Results also found that boys raised in fatherless families, irrespective of mothers' sexual orientation, showed more feminine behaviors than boys raised in families with fathers; however, they showed no fewer masculine characteristics than boys raised with fathers.

Measures: Parents' psychological state, parenting practices and attitudes, quality of parent-child relationship, child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's school functioning, child's gender behavior

Types of families: Single and two-parent lesbian families, single heterosexual mother families, and two-parent heterosexual families

This study was a follow-up to a previous study (Golombok et al., 1997), and included 25 lesbian mother families, 38 single heterosexual mother families, and 38 two-parent heterosexual families, all with children of the same mean age. Researchers administered interviews and questionnaires to parents and children, investigating mothers' psychological state, the quality of the parenting (warmth, sensitivity, emotional involvement, disciplinary aggression), the quality of the parent-child relationship (e.g., warmth between parent and child, confiding of child in mother, severity of disputes), children's socioemotional development (child's psychiatric state, peer problems, school functioning), and gender role orientation. Teachers also filled out questionnaires about children's behavioral and emotional problems.

There were no differences between groups of children on any measures of adjustment. They had similar scores on emotional and behavioral problems, school adjustment, peer relationships, and self-esteem. In terms of quality of the parenting and the parent-child relationship, the groups were similar on most measures, but there were two significant differences. First, in the lesbian and single heterosexual mother families, children perceived their mothers as interacting with them more and as being more available and dependable than did children in two-parent heterosexual families. Second, lesbian and single heterosexual mothers reported more serious disputes with their children and more irritability and loss of temper during disciplinary interactions; single heterosexual mothers reported higher levels of disciplinary aggression than the lesbian mothers. The authors suggested the possibility that this might be due to fathers taking on more of the disciplining role in heterosexual couple families. Neither the lesbian nor the single heterosexual mothers showed dysfunctional levels of disciplinary aggression. Finally, with respect to children's gender role orientation, it was found that boys raised without a father, regardless of their mothers' sexual orientation, showed more feminine characteristics though no fewer masculine characteristics.

MacCallum, Fiona, and Susan Golombok. 2004. "Children Raised in Fatherless Families from Infancy: A Follow-Up of Children of Lesbian and Single Heterosexual Mothers at Early Adolescence." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 45, no. 8: 1407-1419.

The Child's Home Environment for Lesbian vs. Heterosexual Mothers: A Neglected Area of Research

JUDITH ANN MILLER, R. BROOKE JACOBSEN, JERRY J. BIGNER (1981)

Summary: This study measured the way lesbian and heterosexual mothers responded to a variety of

situations involving their children. It found that lesbian mothers were significantly more likely to respond in a child-oriented way (oriented more towards helping the child understand the situation) than the heterosexual mothers who responded in more task-oriented ways (simply disciplining the children without explaining why).

Measures: Parenting practices

Types of families: Lesbian and heterosexual mothers with children from heterosexual marriages

Researchers explored and compared the parenting practices of lesbian and heterosexual mothers. The sample of lesbians was recruited from a feminist recreation center and the heterosexual mothers were recruited from local Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. There were 34 lesbians with a mean age of 32.6 years and 47 heterosexual mothers with a mean age of 35.6 years. There were no significant differences in the level of education of the mothers in the two groups. Almost two thirds of the heterosexual mothers were stay-at-home moms; none of the lesbian mothers were. Over 94% of the lesbian mothers reported a household income of less than \$15,000, while over 87% of the heterosexual mothers reported an income over \$15,000. All of the heterosexual women in the group were married while nearly a quarter of the lesbian mothers were single.

The subjects were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire and to respond to a presentation consisting of slides portraying children in various situations: fighting, disrupting furniture, or refusing to go to bed. The mothers were given three options of response. The responses were categorized as adult oriented, child oriented, and task oriented. For example, one slide portrayed two children in a sword fight with the smaller child in imminent danger. The choices for response were: (a) "Break it up. Stop that right now" (Adult-Oriented Response), (b) talk to them about how hitting can hurt and suggest something else for them to do (Child-Oriented Response), or (c) take the sticks away from them (Task-Oriented Response). There were significant differences in the responses of lesbian and heterosexual mothers; lesbian mothers were more likely to be child-oriented than heterosexual mothers, who tended to be more task-oriented.

Miller, Judith Ann, R. Brooke Jacobsen, Jerry J. Bigner, 1981. "The Child's Home Environment for Lesbian vs. Heterosexual Mothers: A Neglected Area of Research." *Journal of Homosexuality* 7, no. 1 (Fall): 49-56.

Families of the Lesbian Baby Boom: Children's Contact with Grandparents and Other Adults

CHARLOTTE J. PATTERSON, SUSAN HURT, AND CHANDRA D. MASON (1998)

Summary: This study found that the children of lesbian parents were likely to have regular contact with their grandparents, as well as with other related and unrelated adults, although in two-parent families, biological relatedness correlated with greater relative contact. The study also looked at the relationship between the children's contact with their grandparents and the children's adjustment, finding that the children who had regular contact with their grandparents reported fewer behavioral problems.

Measures: Child's social adjustment, child's emotional/psychological well-being

Types of families: Lesbian couples and lesbian single mothers

This study examined the extent to which the children of lesbian mothers had contact with their grandparents and other related and unrelated adults, and the possible associations of any such contacts with the children's mental health. Thirty-seven families participated, 26 headed by a couple and 7 by a single mother. The mothers had a mean age of 39.6 years. Most were white, well-educated, middle class, and employed full time. The mean age of the children was six years and two months. All of the families lived in the greater San Francisco Bay area. The families were recruited through friends, acquaintances, and colleagues. Ninety-five percent of the families contacted agreed to participate.

The researchers interviewed the mothers about their children's contacts with grandparents and other adults. The children's adjustment and self-concept were measured using standardized tests. The behavioral test scored internalizing and externalizing behavior and was completed by the mothers. The self-concept test was administered individually to participating children.

The majority of the children were found to have at least annual contact with grandparents, and many had monthly or more frequent contact. The relationship status of the parent (couple versus single) was not found to have a significant impact on the frequency with which children saw their grandparents. About one third of the children reported being in at least annual contact with other female relatives of both the biological and nonbiological mothers. Most of the children also reported being in regular contact with adults (both men and women) who were not their relatives. On average, the children were described as having monthly or more frequent contact with six adults outside their households, among whom there were twice as many nonrelatives. Like other children in the U.S., these children were found to have more contact with adult women than with adult men; on average they saw approximately four women and two men.

Among children in two-parent families, they were found to have more contact

with relatives of their biological mother than those of their nonbiological mother. Ninety-seven percent had annual or more frequent contact with their biological mother's mother, while 74% had such contact with their nonbiological mother's mother. Most of the children had at least monthly contact with their biological mother's parents, while only a third had that much contact with their non-biological mother's parents. With regard to the children's adjustment, more frequent contact with grandparents was associated with fewer internalizing behavior problems and fewer total behavior problems. There were no significant associations between grandparent contact and externalizing behavior problems. While there was no association between the children's reports of well-being and their contact with grandparents or other relatives, children who had frequent contact with non-relative adults experienced greater feelings of well-being.

Patterson, Charlotte J., Susan Hurt, and Chandra D. Mason. "Families of the Lesbian Baby Boom: Children's Contact with Grandparents and Other Adults." *Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 68, no. 3 (1998): 390-397.

Division of Labor Among Lesbian and Heterosexual Parenting Couples: Correlates of Specialized vs. Shared Patterns

CHARLOTTE J. PATTERSON, ERIN L. SUTFIN, AND MEGAN FULCHER (2004)

Summary: This study found that lesbian couples were more likely to divide paid and unpaid labor evenly, whereas within heterosexual couples, husbands were more likely to invest more time in paid employment and wives devoted more time to unpaid family work. In heterosexual couples, structural variables, such as the husband's hours of paid work, determined the division of labor. In lesbian couples, ideological variables, such as parents' ideas about ideal divisions of labor, determined the actual division of labor.

Measures: Parenting practices and attitudes; quality of relationship between parents

Types of families: Lesbian and heterosexual couples with children

This study compared the division of family labor between lesbian and heterosexual couples who were parenting four- to six-year-old children. Sixty-six families participated: 33 lesbian couples and 33 heterosexual couples. The families were recruited through churches, daycare centers, parenting support groups, and word of mouth. All resided in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The couples were well-matched, but there were some demographic differences between the two groups. The lesbian genetic/adoptive mothers were older than the het-

erosexual couples were more likely to be nonwhite (16 versus 2) and adopted (17 versus 5). The children's race and adoptive status were found to have no correlation with parental division of labor. Standardized tests were used to measure parental attitudes concerning children's gender-related behavior, parental division of labor, satisfaction with the couple relationship, and demographic information.

The study found that lesbian couples divided child care more evenly than heterosexual couples. Each mother was likely to do about half of the childcare, while heterosexual mothers reported doing more child care than fathers. Lesbian mothers reported an equal distribution of child care, while heterosexual mothers reported that they would ideally do somewhat more than half of the child care. In terms of household work, both lesbian and heterosexual couples reported that each partner did about half the work. There were no differences between or within groups in terms of subjects' feelings of competence in performing child care tasks.

Researchers then examined the variables that might account for the differences in the participation of second parents (fathers and nonbiological lesbian mothers). The study found that there was no significant association between couples' relationship satisfaction and the second parent's participation. Occupational prestige, however, did have an effect among lesbian couples. When there was a difference between occupational prestige, the second mother participated more. The number of hours spent in paid employment by the second parent affected participation for both lesbian and heterosexual couples. When second parents spent more time at work, they reported doing less child care. Second parent's ideal distribution of labor for child care was strongly associated with that parent's participation in both lesbian and heterosexual couples. In lesbian couples, the more the second parent wanted to be responsible for child care, the more she actually participated in it. For heterosexual couples, there was no strong connection between ideal division of labor and actual division of labor.

Patterson, Charlotte J., Erin L. Sutfin, and Megan Fulcher. 2004. "Division of Labor among Lesbian and Heterosexual Parenting Couples: Correlates of Specialized versus Shared Patterns." *Adult Development* 11, no. 3: 179-189.

Adults Raised as Children in Lesbian Families

FIONA TASKER AND SUSAN GOLOMBOK (1995)

Summary: This study found no significant difference between young adults raised by lesbian parents and those raised by heterosexual parents in the quality of their relationships with their mothers, exposure to teasing or bullying in high school, or their emotional well-being. No differences were found in the proportion of each group that reported experiencing sexual attraction to some

one of the same sex, although the children of lesbians were more likely to act, or consider acting, on those attractions.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's social adjustment, quality of parent-child relationship, child's sexuality

Types of families: Divorced lesbian and heterosexual mothers

This follow-up study of Golombok and Tasker's 1976-1977 study took place in 1991-1992. The original study looked at a group of families headed by divorced lesbian mothers and a group of families headed by single, divorced heterosexual mothers. In the original study, each group had 27 mothers and 39 children. For this study, 25 of the adult children raised by lesbian mothers (8 men and 17 women) and 21 of the children raised by heterosexual mothers (12 men and 9 women) decided to participate again. In each group, the average age of the participants was 23.5 years. The authors used individual interviews to obtain data on the participants' family relationships, peer relationships, and sexual orientation. They used two standardized questionnaires to measure participants' anxiety and depression levels.

In the original study, the authors excluded any heterosexual mother with a live-in partner, but in this follow-up almost all of the heterosexual mothers had remarried or had live-in partners. According to reporting from the two groups of children, significantly more children of lesbian mothers felt positively about their relationship with their mothers' partners than children of heterosexual mothers felt about their mothers' new husbands or boyfriends. Young adults with lesbian mothers were also significantly more likely to report being "proud" of their mother's sexual identity and having positive feelings towards their mothers' identities (i.e., lesbian mother or single, heterosexual mother). There was no difference, however, between the two groups' retrospective reports of these same feelings during adolescence. Nor did the groups differ in the overall quality of participants' current relationship with their biological mother.

Both groups were equally likely to remember being teased or bullied by their peers, and they also did not differ in the proportion who remembered being teased specifically about their family background or mother's lifestyle. However, participants from lesbian families—particularly male participants—were significantly more likely to recall being teased about being lesbian or gay themselves. A majority of the children of lesbian parents had told at least one friend about their mother's sexual orientation. Five had successfully concealed that information. Four reported that they tried to conceal it but friends found out. Five reported negative reactions from a friend, but two subsequently turned positive. The groups did not significantly differ in the proportion of young adults who reported at least one instance of sexual attraction to someone of the same sex. Young adults raised by lesbians, however, were significantly more likely to report having been involved in, or having considered, acting on those same-sex

attractions. All participants from both groups reported at least one sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of anxiety level or depression level, and similar proportions of both groups had seen a health care professional for problems arising from anxiety, depression, or stress.

Tasker, Fiona, and Susan Golombok. 1995. "Adults Raised as Children in Lesbian Families." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 65, no. 2: 203-215.

What Does It Mean for Youngsters to Grow Up in a Lesbian Family Created by Means of Donor Insemination?

KATRIEN VANFRAUSSEN, INGRID PONJAERT-KRISTOFFERSEN, AND ANNE BREWAEYS (2002)

Summary: This study found no difference in the psychological well-being of children of lesbian couples born through donor insemination and children born to heterosexual couples. It also found that almost all children in two-mother homes openly discussed their family life with close friends but discussed the topic with others only when asked. Furthermore, children from lesbian families were more likely than their peers to experience family-related teasing; they did not experience a greater degree of teasing overall. Researchers found that children from heterosexual parent families had more aggressive behaviors and teachers reported greater attention problems among children from lesbian mother families.

Measures: Child's social adjustment, child's emotional/psychological well-being

Types of families: Lesbian couples with children born by means of donor insemination and heterosexual couples with children conceived conventionally

This study examined the peer relationships and the psychological well-being of children born into lesbian families by means of anonymous donor insemination as compared to children born into heterosexual families. This is the second part of the Belgian longitudinal study on lesbian parenthood. The sample had been drawn from patients at a fertility clinic from 1986-1991. The subjects in the two groups were closely matched with regard to education, age and gender of child, family size and family type (single versus two-parent). At this stage, 24 lesbian mother families and 24 heterosexual parent families were included in the study. In each group,

lies and 24 heterosexual parent families were included in the study. In each group, six couples had divorced or separated. All of the children were between the ages of four and eight.

Data were collected from questionnaires filled out by parents and teachers and by separate interviews with children and parents of both family types. Children of lesbian mother families were interviewed about how they convey the nature of their nontraditional family to peers and the degree of contact they allowed between their family and peers. All children were interviewed about the incidence and content of teasing experiences. Teachers and parents of both family types completed questionnaires regarding children's self-esteem and emotional/behavioral adjustment.

Researchers found that most children of lesbian mother families openly explained the absence of a father by disclosing that they have two mothers. While most children would not explain the nature of their two-mother families to strangers or acquaintances unless explicitly asked, they would spontaneously share the information with their close friends. Moreover, children of lesbian mother families expressed no reluctance in inviting friends home. Children of lesbian and heterosexual parent families showed no differences with respect to self-esteem, emotional well-being, behavioral well-being, or perceived acceptance by peers. Both groups of children reported equal levels of overall teasing. However, children of lesbian mother families reported more family-oriented teasing than children of heterosexual parent families. Researchers found significantly greater aggressive behavior in children of heterosexual parent families than in those of lesbian mother families, particularly among boys. Teachers reported significantly more attention problems for children of lesbian families than those from heterosexual parent families.

Vanfraussen, Katrien, Ingrid Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, and Anne Brewaeys. 2002. "What Does it Mean for Youngsters to Grow up in a Lesbian Family Created by Means of Donor Insemination?" *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* 20, no. 4: 237-252.

Family Functioning in Lesbian Families Created by Donor Insemination

KATRIEN VANFRAUSSEN, INGRID PONJAERT-KRISTOFFERSEN, AND ANNE BREWAEYS (2003)

Summary: This study focused on the importance of biological ties to parent-child relationships in lesbian parent families created by donor insemination. It found that the quality of the children's relationship with the lesbian nonbiological mother ("social mother") is comparable to that with the biological mother. Moreover, lesbian social mothers (unlike

activities as biological mothers. And lesbian social mothers had as much authority as the fathers in heterosexual families.

Measures: Quality of the parent-child relationship

Types of families: Heterosexual couples with conventionally conceived children and lesbian couples with children born through donor insemination

This study focused on the role of social mothers (those with no biological tie to their children) within lesbian parent families. It compared the parenting roles of social mothers with those of biological mothers in lesbian households and those of fathers in heterosexual households. The study included 24 lesbian parent families whose children had been conceived through donor insemination, and 24 naturally-conceived heterosexual parent families. Families were matched as closely as possible according to educational level, age and gender of children, family size, and whether parents were split or together. Children were about ten years old. Interviews were conducted with both parents and separately with the children in each family to address activities, communication, affections, quarrels/disputes, and authority. Participants were also asked to complete the Parent-Child Interaction Questionnaire (PACHIQ), which measures the quality of the parent-child relationship.

The study found no difference in the quality of the parent-child relationships in lesbian and heterosexual parent families. It further found that social mothers held as much authority as heterosexual fathers. Overall, children in lesbian parent families were found to experience as much acceptance and authority as children in heterosexual parent families. The only significant difference that the study found was that, unlike heterosexual parent families, where mothers have greater involvement with their children than fathers do, in lesbian mother families, social mothers shared as much involvement in their children's activities as did biological mothers.

Vanfraussen, Katrien, Ingrid Ponjaert-Kristoffersen and Anne Brewaeys. 2004. "Family Functioning in Lesbian Families Created by Donor Insemination" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 73, no. 1: 78-90.

Psychosocial Adjustment, School Outcomes, and Romantic Relationships of Adolescents with Same-Sex Parents

JENNIFER WAINWRIGHT, STEPHEN T. RUSSELL, AND CHARLOTTE J. PATTERSON (2004)

Summary: This study examined associations among family type (same-sex versus opposite-sex parents); family and relationship variables; and the psychosocial adjustment, school outcomes,

and romantic attractions and behaviors of adolescents. The researchers found that adolescents were functioning well and their adjustment was not generally associated with family type. Assessments of romantic relationships and sexual behavior were not associated with family type. Regardless of family type, adolescents whose parents reported closer relationships with them described better school adjustment.

Measures: Child's emotional/psychological well-being, child's school functioning, quality of parent-child relationship, child's sexuality

Types of families: Lesbian couples and heterosexual couples with adolescent children

This study compared 44 adolescents raised by lesbian couples with 44 adolescents raised by heterosexual couples. The adolescents were twelve to eighteen years old, and their average age was fifteen. The authors drew their sample from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a national study of 12,105 adolescents from high schools across the United States. Data for the Add Health study were collected through in-school surveys of students as well as in-home interviews, surveys, and questionnaires of students and their parents. The sample collected from the Add Health study is nationally representative. Adolescents in the two groups were matched by sex, age, ethnic background, adoption status, learning disability status, family income, and parents' educational attainment.

Adolescents were assessed on a wide variety of variables, including various aspects of their psychosocial adjustment (depression, anxiety, self-esteem), school functioning (GPA, school connectedness, trouble in school), and romantic relationships, attractions, and behaviors. The study also examined several family and relationship variables such as parents' assessment of the quality of the parent-child relationship and adolescents' perceptions of parental warmth, care from adults and peers, integration into the neighborhood, and autonomy. The analyses were conducted in two steps. The first set of analyses evaluated the degree to which adolescents living with lesbian couples differed in their adjustment from the comparison group. The second set of analyses explored associations of adolescent adjustment with assessments of family and relationship processes.

Across a diverse array of assessments, the authors found that the personal, family, and school adjustment of adolescents living with same-sex parents did not differ from that of adolescents living with heterosexual parents. Adolescent self-esteem did not vary as a function of family type. There were no differences as a function of family type in measures of personal adjustment, such as depressive symptoms and anxiety, or in quality of family relationships. There were no differences as a

and anxiety, or in quality of family relationships. There were no differences as a function of family type in measures of school adjustment with one exception—adolescents living with same-sex parents reported feeling more connected to school than did those living with opposite-sex parents. Analyses of adolescents' reports of romantic attractions and behaviors revealed no difference between the groups in the percentage of adolescents who reported ever having engaged in sexual intercourse (34% of adolescents in each group). There was also no significant difference between the groups in the percentage of adolescents who had had a romantic relationship in the past 18 months (68% of adolescents with same-sex parents and 59% of those with opposite-sex parents). Few adolescents reported same-sex attractions or romantic relationships in the past 18 months. Regardless of family type, adolescents were more likely to show favorable adjustment when they perceived more caring from adults and when parents described close relationships with them. When parents reported more satisfying parent-adolescent relationships, adolescents reported significantly less trouble at school and greater feelings of connectedness at school. The qualities of adolescent-parent relationships, rather than the structural features of families, were significantly associated with adolescent adjustment.

Wainwright, Jennifer, Stephen T. Russell and Charlotte J. Patterson. 2004. "Psychosocial Adjustment, School Outcomes, and Romantic Relationships of Adolescents With Same-Sex Parents." *Child Development* 75, no. 2 (November/December): 1886-1898.

